

## THE LAW OF RENT

Illustrations given by Mr G. Bernard Shaw

(In the "Impossibilities of Anarchism," a paper read to the Fabian Society, 16th October, 1891.)

You may start in business as a crossing sweeper, shopkeeper, collier, farmer, miller, banker, or what not. Whatever your choice may be, the first thing you find is that the reward of your labour depends far more on the situation in which you exercise it than on yourself. If you sweep the crossing between St. James's and Albemarle Streets you prosper greatly. But if you are forestalled not only there, but at every point more central than, say, the corner of Holford Square, Islington, you may sweep twice as hard as your rival in Piccadilly, and not take a fifth of his toll.

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Your takings depend, not on yourself, but on the number of people who pass your window per hour. At Charing Cross or Cheapside fortunes are to be made: in the main street at Putney one can do enough to hold up one's head: further out, a thousand yards right or left of the Portsmouth Road, the most industrious man in the world may go whistle for a customer. Evidently retail shopkeeping is not the thing for a man of spirit after Charing Cross and Cheapside have been appropriated by occupying owners on the principle of first come first served.

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Take that financial trinity, Glyn, Mills and Currie; transplant them only a few miles from Lombard Street; and they will soon be objects of pity to the traditional sailor who once presented at their counter a cheque for £25 and generously offered to take it in instalments, as he did not wish to be too hard on them all at once. Turning your back on banking, you meddle in the wheat trade, and end by offering to exchange an occupying ownership of all Salisbury Plain for permission to pay a rack rent for premises within hail of "The Baltic" and its barometer.

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A good soil will often yield the strongest and richest grain to less labour per acre or per bushel than must be spent on land that returns a crop less valuable by five shillings a quarter.

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Of two men with equally good heart to work and machinery to work with, one may be on a stream that will easily turn six millstones; whilst the other, by a natural default of water, or being cut off by his fellow higher up stream, may barely be able to keep two pairs of stones in gear, and may in a dry season be ready to tie these two about his neck and lie down under the scum of his pond.

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How would occupying ownership of mines work, when it is an easier matter to get prime Wallsend and Silkstone out of one mine than to get slates and steam fuel out of another, even after twenty years' preliminary shaft-sinking?

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It would take an extraordinary long course of demolition, reconstruction and landscape gardening to make every dwelling house in London as desirable as a house in Park Lane, or facing Regent's Park, or overlooking the Embankment Gardens. And since everybody cannot be accommodated there, the exceptionally favoured persons who occupy those sites will certainly be expected to render an equivalent for their privileges to those whom they exclude.

## THE COMING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Convened by the International Union, the Fourth International Conference to Promote Land Value Taxation and Free Trade, will be held in Edinburgh, 27th July to 2nd August, 1929. It meets also to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the publication of "Progress and Poverty."

Readers in every country are invited to give their names and their support as Members of this Conference—their personal association whether they are near or far; and early enrolment will be the best encouragement to all who in many lands are working for its success.

The well-appointed Assembly Hall of the New College, with adjoining halls and rooms, has been engaged for the occasion. The building is one of the finest and most commodious places in Scotland for the holding of such conventions.

Membership of the Conference is open to all who accept and approve the objects of the International Union—the promotion of land value taxation and free trade as taught by Henry George. The Membership Fee is £1.

ENROL NOW either as a visiting or an affiliate member. Help to build up a large and representative list from all countries whether you can be present or not. But aim to be there, deciding upon

### EDINBURGH FOR 1929 HOLIDAYS IN ATTENDANCE AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

### THE ECONOMICS OF THE BIRTH RATE

At the meetings of the British Medical Association in Cardiff on 27th July Professor W. J. Roberts, in a paper on the "Economic Aspect" of the falling birth-rate, said he did not think that our own island, to say nothing of what had been called our little planet, was overcrowded, or that our difficulties were due to any approximation to such a calamity. Our troubles were due, not to the efforts of free and equal people to win a livelihood, and were accordingly not "economic" in any such simple sense, but to causes which he might distinguish as political, that was, to habits and institutions whose origin and purpose were mastery and privilege and monopoly. That justice should prevail over the whole economic community and not merely, if that were possible in such isolation, within the boundaries of particular States, was seen to be the main condition on which the continuous unfolding of productive capacity depended.

Professor Roberts is the professor of Economics at the Cardiff University. He is known to our readers for his interest in the work of the Welsh League, under whose auspices he recently conducted an economic class with Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* as the textbook.

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